2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5



241 cultivators. The site of the village itself is also believed to provide
242 a very rich soil, because 'many things have lain and rotted there'
134 and because of 'the many footsteps of people passing'.

241 Most natives will add that human excrement makes soil rich.
514 A specially fine crop of cassava has been explained to me as due to
576 the excrement of children. But here there is a certain amount of contradiction. No Bemba will admit that an adult could ever defaecate on a village bed. This would be strictly counter to etiquette, among a people who have a horror of touching night-soil. Only small children would commit such a breach of good manners, it is maintained, in spite of ocular evidence that the rule is sometimes broken. Hence a native will admit that the fertility of an old village site is partly due to human manure which gives it *umufundo*, but will scold children for using the *mputa* for such purposes. At Canda we Eiya an enraged woman even threatened to call down a curse (*ukulapishya*) on the children who had evidently defaecated on her garden beds. She screamed out, 'You children, you! You go on defaecating on my cassava, you! You make us eat excrement. That is not a good thing, no! I am really going to put a curse on you this time.' It is not surprising, therefore, that in the few places where cattle are kept, the natives object strongly to the idea of using kraal manure.

241 House sites themselves (*ifitantala*) become a heap of rubble and decaying sticks after the hut walls have been demolished, and a season's rain has fallen on the ruins. After a year, or perhaps two, the raised mound on which the house stood formerly is soft enough to plant. The Bemba sow maize on it or tobacco plants. Whether the surface soil has a high percentage of lime from the plaster walls, or is merely rich in nitrogenous matter from the hut refuse, it is clear to the naked eye that maize flourishes on these *ifitantala*. At Kungu village in April 1934, the plants grown on the deserted house sites were 3 feet higher than those planted elsewhere. This frequent use of the soil of village sites is an important point. Most Europeans in the district look forward to the day when the Bemba will build permanent houses and adopt fixed cultivation. There would be obvious advantages in such a course from many points of view, but on this poor soil, in the absence of cattle manure, the practice of shifting huts, while continuing to use the deserted site, gives the Bemba the richest soil they have for certain crops, such as maize and the various cucurbits.